

Montana Department of
Public Health & Human Services

Section:

Serving the Family

CHILD CARE

Subject:

Issuing the Child Care Certification Plan

Supersedes: Child Care 6-3 (5/1/05)

References: Sections 52-2-701-704, 52-2-711-713, 53-4-610 MCA;
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98

General Rule

Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are issued through a child care certification plan, authorizing care for up to six months. The child care hours approved must mirror the approved parent and child's activities:

- ☐ Parent's work, school, & Family Investment Agreement/
Employability Plan (FIA/EP) activities requiring child care, allowing for travel time.
- ☐ The child's schedule, school, or alternative care arrangements.

The certification plan is mailed to the parent and the provider with the following information:

- ☐ The name(s) of the children authorized for care.
- ☐ The name of the child care provider authorized to provide care.
- ☐ The number of hours per week for which Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship is authorized.
- ☐ The number of months for which authorization is granted.
- ☐ The amount of monthly co-payment, which the parent must pay to the provider.

**Prospect the
Length of the
Child Care
Certification
Plan**

Prospect eligibility based on the information known at the time of application or re-certification. The CCR&R Eligibility Specialist must take into account whether the family is participating in TANF, Non-TANF or CPS. If a change in eligibility is not prospected, set up a certification plan for six months.

CCR&R Eligibility Specialists should create a certification plan, which closely matches the parent's work and/or school schedule if there is a need for care during these hours. If the parent is on a regular schedule, the certification plan should be set up using a daily time frame. If the parent is on a varied

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schedule, the certification plan should be set up using a weekly-approved amount of time. The CCR&R Eligibility Specialist will consider travel time for the parent to and from work in determining the certification plan.

If the household anticipates a change in the reason or the need for child care, set the length of the child care certification plan to end when the household change occurs.

EXAMPLE: A college student applies for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship and meets all program requirements. The CCR&R Eligibility Specialist has determined the parent eligible for child care but only issued a certification plan until the end of the semester because the need for child care is uncertain past that date.

Once eligibility is correctly prospect, a child care certification plan should be issued as soon as possible. If a delay occurs, such as waiting for LUP background checks, issue the child care certification plan based on the date eligibility was determined.

NOTE: Should the eligibility specialist find out the family was not actually eligible when the determination was made, due to misinformation of some type, a certification plan would not be issued.

A child care certification plan may be modified or terminated at any time. Ten days before any reduction of the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship, a new child care certification plan or closure notice, is mailed to the parent and the provider. See Change Reporting, as outlined in Section 6-4 of the manual.

Maximum Hours

Child care may be authorized for up to 20 hours per day. (24-hour care will be paid as two full-time days.) However, care in excess of ten hours/day may be approved only when the parent's activity exceeds ten hours/day. Verification of the work/school/FIA schedule must be received from the employer before care in excess of ten hours/day will be approved.

- ⇒ Verify approved work/school/FIA schedules before authorizing care in excess of ten hours per day.
- ⇒ Case note the reason for authorizing a child care certification plan in excess of ten hours per day.

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- ⇒ If the certification plan specifies service exceeding 16 hours of care during a calendar day, the state will pay twice the daily rate for each hour exceeding 16.

Minimum Hours



In an effort to increase billing accuracy, child care certification plans shall represent the most accurate amount of child care needed by each child and each family. CCR&Rs have the ability to override invoices when the family exceeds the amount of care certified.

EXAMPLE: A parent has a varying work schedule. The parent consistently needs 20 hour each week for employment. The parent occasionally needs 25 or 30 hours per week for employment.

- ⇒ The child care certification plan should be issued at 20 hours per week and overridden as needed.

EXAMPLE: One child arrives after Head Start, and their sibling attends after school, arriving one hour later.

- ⇒ Set up a schedule specific to each child on the child care certification plan.

Extending Child Care Hours – Meeting the Parent's Need for Child Care

A family may have a need to temporarily extend hours beyond the current certification plan. The CCR&R eligibility specialist may approve additional hours beyond the limit of the child care certification plan if the need is verified. Document the need for more hours with written verification.

- ⇒ Verify the need for additional child care.
- ⇒ Document the need for additional care on CCUBS:
- Enter reason for additional care on the comment line on the invoice screen; or
 - Case note the reason for additional care.
- ⇒ When an invoice requires an override, the reason for the override will be entered on the invoice upper comment line before it is overridden.
- ⇒ Keep hardcopy documentation on file:
- Case file: written notes from parents, employers, or school

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officials;

- Invoice file: hand written comments;
- General File: School calendars, or similar materials, or documentation of community events that affect a number of families.

CCR&Rs shall keep hardcopy records as reference for five years to fulfill audit requirements.

EXAMPLES of these situations include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ❑ A child who normally attends child care only after-school has a full day out of school.
- ❑ A parent must tend to the medical emergency of an immediate family member.
- ❑ A parent picks up an additional work shift on short notice.
- ❑ A parent has a short-term employment or training related schedule change.

No Need for Child Care

An employment or household change relieves the need for child care.

- ⇒ End the certification plan;
- ⇒ Notify the parent and provider; and
- ⇒ Case note.

EXAMPLE: One parent takes a night shift and is available to care for the children during the day. If the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship is no longer needed, close the case.

EXAMPLE: Child moves out of the household, resulting in no need for care -or- the second parent moves back in and is available to care for the children.

Private and Home School

Any licensed or registered child care provider is not eligible for child care assistance for children who fall within the age groups traditionally serviced by the public school system, or alternately a private or home school and who are attending said school for educational purposes during traditional school hours are not eligible for child care payments. The department will not pay for child care during normal school hours when a child is home schooled.

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**Change in
Provider**

Parents are responsible for notifying the CCR&R, within one business day, when changing or adding a child care provider. If the parent fails to notify the CCR&R of a provider change, but begins to use the new provider, the “new” provider is not eligible for payment until the date the family notifies the CCR&R.

Policy	Requirements
Parent is Unavailable	<p>A parent must be participating in approved work/school/FIA activities when using their Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. In very limited circumstances, it may be determined that a parent is temporarily unavailable to care for their children, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ The parent is unable to provide a safe environment for the child(ren), due to a mental, addictive or physical limitation; or ❑ The parent is tending to the medical emergency of an immediate family member; or ❑ The parent may be working in a different city for a temporary period of time. <p>⇒ Case note the assessment that determined the reason a parent is unavailable to care for their child(ren).</p> <p>⇒ Revisit the parent’s availability at recertification.</p>
Rehabilitation? - Only if Working	Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are not available for rehabilitation activities, when the family does not meet a work requirement.
Respite Care? - Only if CPS	Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are not available for respite care unless a social worker from the Child and Family Services Division (CFSD) refers the family for Child Protective Services authorizes (CPS) child care.
Sleep Time	Sleep time may be approved for parents working or attending education or training activities during the night on a very limited basis, <u>only if no other</u>

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Policy	Requirements
	<p><u>resource exists</u>. Verify and document the arrangement in case notes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Verify work/school schedule. ⇒ Verify no other resources exist. ⇒ Case note factors affecting the child care schedule.
Split Work Shift	<p>A Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may span the break in a split work shift, if it is impractical for the parent to pick up their children during the break. At a minimum, the following factors should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Length of break; ❑ Travel time and travel arrangements; and ❑ Child's schedule while in care (e.g. nap time?). <p>⇒ Case note the factors affecting the child care schedule.</p>
Study Time	<p>Generally, study time is not allowable. However, a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may span the break between classes, if it is impractical for the parent to pick up their children during the break. At a minimum, the following factors should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Length of parent's break; ❑ Parent's travel time and travel arrangements; and ❑ Child's schedule while in care (e.g. nap time, lunch time?). <p>⇒ Case note the factors affecting the child care schedule.</p> <p>If the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship spans the break between classes, a student may use this time to study.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: A post-secondary education student has class from 8:00 to 10:00 a.m., and class from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. A Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may be used to cover the period between 10:00 and 1:00.</p> <p>Students may use a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship to complete out-of-home lab work.</p>

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Policy	Requirements
	<p>⇒ Verify the need for out-of-home lab time.</p> <p>Students are not eligible for Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship during in-home study time.</p>
Maintaining Continuity of Care	<p>As a family's circumstances change, eligibility issues may interrupt the child care certification plan and the child's continuity of care, see Absent Day Policies and Continuity of Care, as outlined in Section 6-6 of this manual:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Certified Enrollment ❑ Extending Child Care Hours ❑ Fill-the-Gap ❑ Grace Period ❑ Hold-the-Slot ❑ Holidays ❑ Medical Appointments ❑ Medical Emergency ❑ Suspending a Case

